

# STATE OF ALASKA

## DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC FACILITIES

### DIVISION OF STATEWIDE PLANNING

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February 18, 2000

Donald Nielsen, President  
South Naknek Village Council  
(Qinuyang)  
P.O. Box 70029  
South Naknek, AK 99670

Re: Southwest Alaska Transportation Plan

Dear Mr. Nielsen:

Thank you for your letter of February 8. In it you offered comments concerning the Williamsport-Pile Bay corridor, the Chignik corridor, and the bridge between Naknek and South Naknek. Your perspective is important to us, and I would like to address some of your concerns to try to better explain what the planning effort can realistically be expected to accomplish.

We share your concerns for the Lake Iliamna watershed. The aim of near-term Williamsport-Pile Bay corridor improvements is primarily to ensure the safety and protect the environment for the roadway as it is currently being used. The washed-out bridges necessitate stream fordings in certain places along the corridor, contributing to what we see as avoidable erosion and loss of habitat. Roadway improvements would lead to a greater use of this corridor, to be sure, but primarily for gillnetter boats moving to/from Bristol Bay, and for delivery of bulk items to communities along Lake Iliamna. This is currently very low volume and is projected to stay that way. Even with harbor improvements, Williamsport remains tidally constrained, and our projections do not show traffic volumes using this corridor that would stress the ecosystem in any appreciable way. What the corridor improvement would accomplish is to significantly reduce the risk to the Bristol Bay gillnetters over making the long transit around the Alaska Peninsula, saving them in fuel and repair costs; and it would lower the cost of fuel and bulk goods delivery to communities along Lake Iliamna. Our analysis in the *Freight Issues and Impacts Technical Memorandum* shows that for the communities further west, it saves very little in costs over current bulk cargo movements through Bristol Bay and up the Kvichak River.


The roadway corridor being looked at between Pile Bay and Bristol Bay is primarily a study for documenting the potential costs and levels of use. We are not expressing our endorsement of this development, but we were asked by our Advisory Committee to give it a look for the plan. That is what we have done.

We are encouraged by your endorsement of the Chignik area transportation improvements being examined. In fact, we have heard very few negative reactions to this development from anyone in the region. The *Freight Issues and Impacts Technical Memorandum* conclusions add a strong economic argument for what is already a regionally popular concept.

The Naknek-South Naknek bridge issue I have addressed in my letter to you dated February 9. I am encouraged to hear about your community plans for a meeting on February 25 to talk about this issue. We have received a number of email comments from South Naknek residents, which we have responded to and posted on our web page. I have enclosed them with this letter.

Thanks again for letting us know your concerns. Please let us know how we can be of further assistance. Our toll-free phone number is 1-888-PLANDOT. Ask for either Eric Taylor (Area Plans Coordinator) or myself.

Sincerely,

  
Jeff Ottesen, AICP  
Statewide Planning Chief

Enclosures (4)

cc:

Mark Scheibe, Parsons-Brinckerhoff